

2002

AGRICULTURAL SUMMARY

The 2002 season began with moderately dry conditions across many areas of the state. Dry conditions were generally a carry-over from the previous fall. Heavy supplemental feeding was necessary in many areas during late winter and continued well into the summer months. Small grains entered the year under stressed conditions. Some abandonment occurred due to these conditions. As spring approached, statewide conditions remained variable. Planting of summer crops began on schedule in southern locations and progressed northward. However, high winds and sparse amounts of moisture caused delays in normal planting activities. Prewatering was required for many crops. Early maturity, abandonment, late or no emergence, and replanting were common across many areas of the state due to the dry situation. Pastures further declined, which led to reduction in livestock herds. Passing storms in a few areas caused localized flooding, but no widespread rain events had taken place. By late spring, conditions had not changed much, except for some areas where severely dry conditions had caused major stress to crops and pastures. Insect activity, especially from grasshoppers, reached critical levels and major damage occurred to crops and pastures in many locations. By early summer, conditions had improved in some areas. Unseasonably heavy storms blanketed many areas of the state, bringing an end to parched conditions. By mid to late summer, many pastures had recovered, and hay growth and production had improved. Rainfall amounts were ideal for some crops, but for some it came too late in the growing season. As summer progressed and fall began harvest was underway across the state. Harvest yields were below average in areas that had been too dry during the growing season. Storms during fall months caused wet conditions in some areas, which hampered harvest activities and affected crop quality. Many pastures were considered adequate as winter approached. Supplemental feeding was necessary in areas that remained dry. Planting of small grains progressed throughout the fall and early winter. Grazing of small grain fields was active in many locations. Moisture levels at year's end were adequate in many areas as prospects for a new season were good. Vegetable and citrus production progressed a little behind normal across Valley locations, but moisture levels had improved in the region.

Conditions in January were dry in many areas across the state. Harvest of previous year's row crops had been completed except for some isolated fields of cotton. Moisture stress continued from the previous year in small grains. Some producers were forced to replant their grain as seedling death had occurred. Insect populations were active in some areas and further damage to many small grain crops was seen. Land preparation was active in most areas. Pastures declined across the state due to the continued dry conditions. As a result of poor pasture conditions, body condition in livestock declined as many producers were unable to meet feed requirements. Supplemental feeding became necessary in most counties. Some planting had begun in South Texas and harvest of vegetables made progress.

Conditions were variable during the month of February. In early months some locations reported record-breaking temperatures, however they were soon followed by passing cold fronts which brought high winds and isolated snow showers to areas of the Plains. Elsewhere, only light rain showers were reported. Stress in small grains continued as the result of dry conditions. Insect populations continued to build and caused varying levels of damage. Land preparation was active across the state, but some areas were too dry and producers waited for rainfall before beginning farming activities. Planting of summer crops continued to move northward, but a few locations in southern areas were too wet and drying out was necessary. Range and pastures continued to decline across the state with the exception of some eastern locations where rainfall had been adequate. Supplemental feeding was heavy in most areas and some producers were totally out of hay supplies. Harvest of vegetables continued in the Lower Valley.

March began with freezing and record low temperatures across many areas of the state. Some areas also reported sleet and snow showers. Small grains were additionally stressed and some death loss in both irrigated and dryland fields occurred. By mid month, conditions varied from extremely wet in some areas to dry and windy in others. Abandonment of acreage was being considered by many producers in drier areas. Land preparation continued where conditions allowed. Emergence of earlier planted crops was variable due to moisture shortages. Range and pasture conditions were variable across the state, and supplemental feeding was active in many locations. Reduction and some herd liquidation continued to occur. Water available to livestock remained short in a few locations. Harvest of vegetables continued in the Valley and Winter Garden locations.

April began with normal temperatures across the state. Early in the month, some areas received severe storms with heavy rainfall, while other areas remained dry. In many areas, small grains continued to suffer from moisture stress. A few locations across the Plains reported a total loss of the wheat crop. Blowing dust delayed farming activities from time to time across areas of the Plains. By mid to late month, some widespread showers brought relief to many moisture stressed areas around the state. In areas where rains fell, small grains showed some recovery. Abandonment and crop failure had occurred in many other locations. Prewatering was necessary before many crops could be planted, and in some locations, rain was needed before planting could occur. In the wettest locations, range and pasture conditions improved, however some areas remained dry and water was unavailable to some livestock herds. Grasshopper populations increased and caused further crop damage across the state.

Conditions in May were generally dry across the state. High winds continued to deplete soil moisture and blowing dust was a problem for many farming operations. In most areas, earlier planted crops continued to show signs of moisture stress, and maturity had accelerated some small grain fields. Dry planting was the only option for some producers, but some areas were too dry to plant. Moisture was extremely short in most areas of the state. By mid-month, some crop damage was reported in various locations as the result of heavy thunderstorms. The state remained mostly dry throughout the month. Livestock herd reductions were common and supplemental feeding remained a must in most areas. Water available to livestock was depleted in some areas, and hauling water was necessary. Insect populations, especially grasshoppers, caused heavy losses to both crops and pastures in many areas.

June began with unsettled conditions in most areas of the state. Storms accompanied by heavy rainfall and some hail crossed portions of the Plains. Crop damage varied across the area, and some locations had severe losses. Sea breeze showers occurred in southern locations, however only minor accumulations were recorded. Replanting remained active as the result of earlier storms damage. In southern areas, many producers indicated rainfall had come too little and too late to benefit some row crops. Harvest of small grains was mostly completed. In areas where earlier heavy rains fell, some producers reported that small grains had sprouted heads. Some producers had not completed summer planting, but planting in dry soils was the only option for many producers. Supplemental feeding of livestock remained active and some producers were relying on CPR grazing to sustain their herds. Grasshopper populations were high and caused major damage to crops and pastures.

Conditions in July changed rapidly for most of the state. Heavy rains associated with a tropical low pressure came early in the month to many areas. Severe flooding replaced dry conditions in most areas of the state. A few lakes and rivers were filled or flowed at all time capacities. Property damage in some areas was high, and some losses to livestock and crops occurred as the result of the heavy rainfall. Harvest of summer crops was on hold in many areas as conditions were too wet to support harvest equipment. Developing crops in wet areas benefitted and recovery of ranges and pastures had begun. Soils were drying out by late month and harvest resumed in many locations. Land preparation was active and haying operations had moved forward. Despite the rain, some parts of the state remained dry and conditions were unimproved in these locations. Supplemental feeding subsided in the wet areas, but continued in other areas. Some areas had reported an abundance of hay by late month. Grasshopper and armyworm populations were high in some areas at month's end.

Conditions were seasonably hot in August across the state, but many areas received additional moisture during the month. Cool fronts and tropical moisture brought considerable amounts of moisture to many locations. However, a few areas remained dry during the month and crops in these areas remained under severe moisture stress. Harvest of summer crops became more widespread during the month and only brief delays occurred from weather problems. Land preparation was active and planting of small grains had begun in isolated locations. Haying operations were thriving and many producers reported a surplus of hay. Supplemental feeding was about normal for this time of year in most areas, but remained high in the driest areas. Water available for livestock was short in many of these areas. Insect populations including green bugs, armyworms, grasshoppers, and boll worms, remained high.

Early September was mostly hot across the state. Scattered thunderstorms, some severe, were reported in many areas of North Texas and the Edwards Plateau. Tropical Storm Fay dropped large amounts of rain in coastal and some central locations. Land preparation and harvesting activities remained active across the state, but some delays occurred. Planting of small grains intensified with the aid of rainfall across the state. Haying operations continued to improve, but some delays were seen from time to time. Some areas remained dry and moisture stress continued. Supplemental feeding remained necessary in some areas, but had eased in areas with improved pastures. Grasshopper pressure had decreased by late month, but many producers were experiencing armyworm problems.

Conditions in October were considerably cooler across the entire state. Areas of the Plains received heavy rainfall and some large hail early in the month, while parts of the Gulf Coast and East Texas received rainfall associated with Hurricane Lili. Remaining harvest moved ahead across the state, but delays were frequent. Planting of small grains continued as conditions allowed. Land preparations were also active. Some areas remained excessively dry and progress in these areas was minimal. Pasture conditions were variable across the state with some areas showing adequate recovery while others were severely poor. Hay baling operations remained active and many producers reported a surplus of hay. Supplemental feeding was about normal in most areas, however remained high in the driest locations. By late month, conditions had declined as light snow, freezing rain and showers crossed the Plains. Elsewhere, moderate to heavy rainfall suspended farming activities.

Conditions in early November were mostly undesirable in many areas. Some areas received as much as five to six inches of rainfall. Freezing temperatures occurred in some areas of the Plains. By the second week, conditions had improved across the state and drying out was in progress. The warmer temperatures enhanced the growth of small grains as grazing of some small grain fields was in progress. Harvest of remaining row crops made good progress as drying out became sufficient in many locations. As the month progressed, light frost accelerated maturity in remaining summer crops in several areas. Supplemental feeding gradually increased across the state as pasture dormancy moved southward as the result of colder sustained temperatures. End of season haying operations continued in a few locations.

Conditions in December were mostly cold and wet across many areas of the state. Widespread snowfall and freezing rain covered many areas of the Plains. Southern areas received varied amounts of rainfall and some localized flooding was reported. Between weather fronts, harvest of summer crops was mostly completed, however a few crops were abandoned due to the lingering wet conditions. Small grains continued to make progress, but colder conditions slowed the process. Land preparation and late planting of small grains was active in a few areas where soils were dry enough. Supplemental feeding increased across the state as winter like conditions remained constant. Sickness in livestock was about average for this time of year. Citrus harvest was active in portions of the Lower Valley.